

LOS ANGELES LONG BEACH HARBOR SAFETY COMMITTEE

Subcommittee #1 – Navigation Safety

Meeting Minutes – July 31st 2009
At the offices of the Southern California Marine Exchange

ATTENDEES

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Please double-check your name, phone number and email address and advise of any errors. Thanks!

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REFERENCE MATERIALS

California Air Resource Board Marine Notices 2009-1 through 2009-4
NOAA Chart 18740 including
NOAA Chart 18720
U.S. Coast Pilot #7
Attachments depicting recently experienced traffic congestion – “Traffic Screen Shot 1 & 2”
Attachment depicting Proposed Western Traffic Lanes – “LALB Western Traffic Lanes”

SPECIAL BUSINESS

The special meeting was called to order at the SOCAL Marine Exchange in San Pedro at 1335.

John Betz, POLA PILOTS, welcomed all subcommittee members and members of the public and thanked everyone for attending this special Navigation Safety Subcommittee meeting on such short notice. Thereafter, he gave a brief overview of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) regulations that became effective on July 1st and referred all to the CARB’s Marine Notices 1 – 4.¹ The new CARB regulation requires ocean-going vessels to burn a low sulfur distillate fuel within Regulated California Waters (RCW), which lie within 24 nautical miles of the CA Baseline.²

Because of engineering issues, fuel storage issues or economic considerations, there can be incentive for a vessel master to clear the RCW and switch to residual fuel as quickly as possible. If a vessel master transits to/from the ports of LALB via the Santa Barbara Channel, his/her vessel will travel approximately 150 miles within the RCW. Alternatively, if a master elects to transit south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands, the RCW distance is reduced to approximately 40 miles.

Traditionally, container and dry cargo vessels arriving from and departing to the west or north have transited through the Santa Barbara Channel. There is an IMO approved Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) through that area separating westbound and eastbound traffic.³ However, no such formalized routing system exists to separate traffic flows in the waters south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands.

Recently **Dick McKenna, San Pedro Vessel Traffic Service**, apprised the Los Angeles Long Beach Harbor Safety Committee (LALB HSC) of increased traffic congestion in the area south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands and requested that the committee review the issue and take any action deemed necessary to ensure continued navigation safety in that area. This special meeting of the Navigation

¹ http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/documents/marinenote2009_1.pdf
http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/documents/marinenote2009_2.pdf
http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/documents/marinenote2009_3.pdf
http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/documents/marinenote2009_4.pdf

² See CARB Marine Notice 2009-2, page 6, for a chart showing the Regulated CA Waters within the 24 nautical mile zone.

³ The Santa Barbara Channel TSS is comprised of 1-mile wide traffic lanes on either side of a 2-mile wide separation zone.

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Safety Subcommittee (the subcommittee) was called by **Chairman John Strong**⁴ to review the recent changes in vessel traffic patterns, and, if warranted, draft appropriate recommendations for consideration by the full LALB HSC.

Reid Crispino, SOCALMX/VTS, provided the subcommittee with an overview of recent changes to the normal traffic pattern in the western approaches to LALB as observed by the San Pedro Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). During the past month the VTS has become aware of a significant increase in the amount of traffic and traffic congestion in the waters south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands. More and more vessel masters are electing to transit south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands rather than through the Santa Barbara Channel TSS.

The VTS has observed several situations in which uncontrolled traffic flowing in opposite directions became congested, increasing the risk of collision. Westbound vessels have passed through clusters of eastbound vessels and vice-versa. During one such event, the VTS watchstanders became concerned that navigation safety exigencies required they intervene even though the events were occurring outside their area of responsibility.

The chairman then asked the subcommittee whether they believed the changed traffic pattern increased the risk of collision and raised navigation safety concerns sufficiently to warrant action by the LALB HSC. Open subcommittee discussion followed. **Reid Crispino, VTS** offered that the congestion issues south of the Channel Islands were likely to get worse at such time as the U.S. economy improved. At present ship traffic to LALB is down, but it is generally felt that it will increase, perhaps significantly, sometime during the next year.

Captain Jeff Cowan, vessel master, expressed concern regarding the minimum passing distance of the vessels depicted in the examples provided by the VTS.⁵ While the minimum passing distance could be considered a serious issue, **Captain Cowan** offered that keeping the opposing traffic flows separated should be the subcommittee's primary concern. **Captain Cowan** advised the subcommittee to also consider that periods of restricted visibility are experienced in these waters. Such conditions of restricted visibility would further increase the risk of collision, particularly with uncontrolled traffic.

Norman George, Crowley, advised the subcommittee that the U.S. Navy would be concerned about increased ship traffic though the Pacific Missile Range.

After discussing these issues, the subcommittee generally agreed that the increased traffic congestion in the waters south of the Santa Barbara Channel Islands, an area without a formalized routing system, increased the risk of collision in that area and raised navigation safety concerns sufficiently to warrant action by the LALB HSC.

⁴ Brown Act §54596 allows the presiding officer of a legislative body of a local agency to call a special meeting at any time upon 24-hour notice to the membership.

⁵ See "Traffic Screen Shot 1"

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The chairman then asked the subcommittee what action should be recommended. After discussion, the subcommittee concluded that the opposing traffic flows should, to the extent possible, be kept separated. **John Betz** offered that studies have shown that formalized routing systems are effective at improving the safety of navigation in converging areas and in areas where the density of traffic is great. In addition, traffic lanes are an effective means to keep opposing traffic flows separated and reduce the risk of collision.

Reid Crispino, VTS distributed a handout depicting a suggestion for establishing new western traffic lanes in the western approaches to Los Angeles/Long Beach harbors.⁶ The proposed traffic lanes extend westward from the southern terminus of the existing IMO traffic lane for southbound coastwise traffic in the western approach.⁷ His proposal shows a new western precautionary area adjacent to the IMO lanes. The purpose of this new western precautionary area is to enable a safer transition for merging traffic. From this new precautionary area, traffic lanes would extend approximately 25 miles on a course of 275° for westbound traffic and 095° for eastbound traffic. These courses were chosen to avoid the National Marine Sanctuary and the Area to Be Avoided around Santa Barbara Island.⁸ The western boundary of the proposed western precautionary area is due north of West End Light on Santa Catalina Island.⁹ The western terminus of the traffic lanes is roughly 40 miles from Point Fermin and coincides approximately with the limit of the RCW.

Discussion followed. It was noted that the new traffic lanes provided for no formal routing through the Pacific Missile Test Center (PMTTC). The subcommittee generally agreed that extending formal routing through the PMTTC could create confusion and ambiguity during those times when the U.S. Navy activated the range and needed to reroute traffic. Also, because the proposed lanes will enable an organized traffic flow to the east of the PMTTC, the traffic pattern through the PMTTC would be more predictable and will enable better collision avoidance decision-making by vessel bridge teams.

A subcommittee member asked whether this (or any) new traffic lanes would alter the required VTS reporting points. **Reid Crispino, VTS**, advised that it should not require any changes to the required reporting points.

Commander Dan Kane, U.S. Coast Guard, advised the subcommittee that if the LALB HSC made any recommendation for the establishment of any new traffic lanes, the U.S. Coast Guard could assist with obtaining IMO approval, but noted that process could take a number of years. The subcommittee generally believes that IMO approval should be the ultimate goal; however, some sort of interim measure is also needed to ensure navigation safety pending such approval.

⁶ See U.S. Coast Pilot #7, Chapter 2, (3648 – 3650) and 33 CFR §167.502

⁷ See “Proposed Western Traffic Lanes for the Approach to Los Angeles / Long Beach Harbor” attached.

⁸ See generally NOAA Chart 18740, and specifically Note “D” and Note: “National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas.”

⁹ This feature of the proposed traffic lanes gives the mariner a visual cue, i.e., a beam bearing to a prominent landmark, for an important transition point.

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Commander Kane inquired whether the LALB HSC would recommend the establishment of new traffic lanes or would they recommend that the Coast Guard take action to establish traffic lanes?

John Betz advised that issue would be referred to the LALB HSC for further discussion. He further offered that whatever recommendations resulted from this process should be implemented as soon as practicable and disseminated broadly to the maritime community. To that end, the LALB HSC would likely request the U.S. Coast Guard to issue notice in the General Corrections section of the Notice to Mariners, in the event a recommendation was forthcoming from that committee. Also, the LALB HSC would likely request that the U.S. NOAA Office of Coast Survey apply that notice to chart products and make it available to the mariner in the U.S. Coast Pilot and print-on-demand charts.

Michael Murray, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, briefed the subcommittee on the importance of the ecosystem in the area of the National Marine Sanctuaries surrounding the Channel Islands and discussed the blue whale feeding and migration patterns in the area. The subcommittee believes that establishing a routing system in the area would further the objectives of preventing environmental harm to the waters in the National Marine Sanctuary and protecting endangered blue whales.

Mike Coyne, OSPR, suggested that the subcommittee consider further outreach to the maritime committee. Specifically, he suggested the LALB HSC issue advisories, 1) to the marine community at large regarding the reduced engine performance while burning low sulfur distillate fuel, and 2) to the oil industry regarding the increased traffic congestion south of the Channel Islands, an area previously used almost exclusively by tank vessels. It was noted that many “engineering issues” associated with burning distillate fuel have been reported. Nonetheless, the subcommittee has not considered those issues at this special meeting, as this meeting was called specifically to deal with traffic safety issues.

Regarding the “engine performance” issue, **John Betz** will attend a meeting of the San Francisco Harbor Safety Committee on August 12th that will discuss engineering issues associated with burning distillate fuels. He will report back to the LALB HSC at the next meeting. In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard has issued a number of advisories on that topic.¹⁰ Regarding “tanker industry notification of increased traffic,” we should revisit this issue coincidental with the recommendations that may be forthcoming from the LALB HSC.

John Betz asked if there was any further discussion. There being none, he put the question to a vote asking:

Whether the LALB Harbor Safety Committee should recommend the establishment of a western precautionary area and eastbound and westbound traffic lanes as proposed by Reid Crispino, San Pedro Vessel Traffic Service.

¹⁰ See U.S. Coast Guard Notices: U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Notice, May 26, 2009

http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/documents/USCG_05_26_09.pdf and

U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Alert 03-09 [http://homeport.uscg.mil/cgi-](http://homeport.uscg.mil/cgi-bin/st/portal/uscg_docs/MyCG/Editorial/20090616/0309.pdf?id=b4d2d5362f707507b6fa4c5cc5b933cba9820ba5)

[bin/st/portal/uscg_docs/MyCG/Editorial/20090616/0309.pdf?id=b4d2d5362f707507b6fa4c5cc5b933cba9820ba5](http://homeport.uscg.mil/cgi-bin/st/portal/uscg_docs/MyCG/Editorial/20090616/0309.pdf?id=b4d2d5362f707507b6fa4c5cc5b933cba9820ba5)

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The vote was cast unanimously in favor of establishing western precautionary area and traffic lanes as described. **John Betz** volunteered to draft the subcommittee's recommendations and distribute them to the committee members and interested public.

It was suggested that the full Harbor Safety Committee should convene a special meeting in late August to address this important issue.

John Betz again thanked all those present for attending this meeting on short notice and for their valuable input on this important issue affecting navigation safety. Also, all interested parties desiring to comment on these issues should forward their comments via email to betzjohn@mac.com or telephone (310) 463 3746.

The meeting adjourned at 1515.

Respectfully submitted,

John Betz
Chairman, Navigation Safety Subcommittee

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